



COUNCIL MINUTES

December 11, 2008

The City Council of the City of Mesa met in a Study Session in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on December 11, 2008 at 7:35 a.m.

COUNCIL PRESENT

Mayor Scott Smith
Alex Finter
Dina Higgins
Kyle Jones
Dennis Kavanaugh
Dave Richins
Scott Somers

COUNCIL ABSENT

None

OFFICERS PRESENT

Christopher Brady
Debbie Spinner
Linda Crocker

1. Hear a presentation, discuss and provide direction on FY08/09 and 09/10 budget issues, including but not limited to.

- a. Development and Sustainability Department (Building Safety, Planning, Environmental Programs, Code Compliance and Water Conservation)
- b. Fire Department
- c. Summary of Budget Discussions

Mayor Smith noted that these presentations are a continuation of reports made to the Council by the major City departments regarding budget adjustments, reductions and changes that are required as a result of the current economic crisis. He stated that the Council would conduct a formal budget review process after the first of the year. Mayor Smith advised that the implementation of major changes in the manner in which the City conducts business is a work in progress.

City Manager Christopher Brady stated that staff will request formal direction from the Council regarding the proposed changes at the December 18th Study Session.

- a. Development and Sustainability Department (Building Safety, Planning, Environmental Programs, Code Compliance and Water Conservation)

Development and Sustainability Department Director Christine Zielonka displayed a PowerPoint presentation (a copy is available for review in the City Clerk's Office). She reported that the number of pre-submittal cases, which have historically served as a predictor of future activity, has rapidly declined during the past few months. Ms. Zielonka added that many of the pre-submittal cases have not materialized as zoning and site plan cases. She reported that revenues associated with planning cases have decreased by fifty percent, and she added that staff anticipates that the trend will continue. She said that although building inspection activity remains strong as projects move toward completion, staff projects that this area will also experience a decline.

Ms. Zielonka reviewed the proposed budget reductions for Fiscal Years 08/09 and 09/10 (see Attachment 1). She said that 65 employees would remain in the department after 136 positions are eliminated.

Councilmember Kavanaugh expressed concern regarding the reduction in the number of Code Compliance positions and the consolidation of the Code Compliance and Building Inspection functions. He noted that Code Compliance issues increase during difficult economic times. Councilmember Kavanaugh recalled that the City abandoned this service model in the 1970's when the Building Inspectors failed to interact with neighborhood groups, City staff and law enforcement. He said that despite his concerns, he was hopeful that this effort would be successful.

Vice Mayor Jones, concurring with the comments made by Councilmember Kavanaugh, said that concerns do exist regarding interaction of Building Inspectors with the neighborhoods. He expressed the hope that the Building Inspectors would take an active role in the neighborhoods.

In response to a question from Councilmember Finter, Ms. Zielonka advised that a collaborative relationship exists with the Fire Protection Engineer and that monthly meetings are held with Fire Department representatives. She noted that a substantial overlap exists between the Fire and Building Codes, and she added that one of the goals is to train additional plan reviewers regarding the Fire Code.

Responding to a question from Councilmember Higgins, Ms. Zielonka advised that plans submitted to the City must be sealed by a professional engineer or architect and that these individuals have the primary responsibility for compliance with the Code.

Mayor Smith noted that the City's responsibility is to review plans to ensure that minimum standards are met.

Councilmember Richins stated that he has received complaints regarding the fact that some staff members have cited the layoffs as an excuse for service delays. He said that the City should provide the same good service even if the department is short-handed. He requested that additional training be provided to ensure that employees do not make these types of excuses to customers in the future.

In response to concerns expressed by Councilmember Somers regarding the City's ability to adjust when the economy rebounds in the future, Ms. Zielonka advised that staff recently discussed customer service levels with the members of the Development Advisory Forum. She noted that outsourcing of contracts has been utilized in the past and would be utilized to address future projects when necessary.

Mayor Smith explained that many cities outsource their engineering staffing needs in order to accommodate fluctuating levels of activity. He added that in the case of small municipalities, all of their engineering staffing may be outsourced rather than utilizing permanent employees.

Ms. Zielonka noted that some former employees have indicated a willingness to return on a temporary basis as needed.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that the City Code is available on the City's website; that a critical element of outsourcing is a thorough review of the contract employee's qualifications; and that the Mesa City Code is not significantly different from the codes of other municipalities.

Mayor Smith stated that although many individuals are qualified to conduct a review, he stressed the importance of retaining qualified individuals who can also facilitate the process.

City Manager Christopher Brady concurred with the comments of Mayor Smith, and he noted that maintaining a high level of customer service was important for both contract and permanent employees. He explained that the City plans to retain some of the contractors now while activity is slow so that these individuals can become familiar with the unique aspects of Mesa's Code and the expected level of service.

Vice Mayor Jones emphasized that the City should be proactive, particularly when working with small developers.

Ms. Zielonka addressed concerns mentioned earlier regarding the Building Inspectors serving as Code Compliance Officers. She said that staff was aware of the potential problems and that the issues would be addressed through training.

Mayor Smith commented that the skill sets are different because Building Inspectors, as professionals, typically deal with other professionals while the professional Code Compliance Officer deals primarily with the average citizen. He said that a great organization needs to have the right people in place.

Ms. Zielonka reported that feedback from the Development Advisory Forum identified their primary concern to be inconsistency in staff between the initial discussions and the final plan review. She advised that a change has been implemented to ensure that the same individual would handle the review process from the initial stage through the final review. Ms. Zielonka said that some developers expressed an interest in having the opportunity to pay for a higher level of service.

Ms. Zielonka, addressing the issue of customer service, clarified that the department does not outsource customer service. She stated that contracts for services would be monitored closely to ensure that excellent service is being provided.

Mayor Smith said he recognized the unique challenges facing the Development and Sustainability Department, and he was appreciative that bold steps have been taken. He thanked Ms. Zielonka and staff for the presentation.

b. Fire Department

City Manager Christopher Brady stated that a significant effort by the Fire Department's management and labor representatives has resulted in a proposal for a new service model designed to achieve overall cost savings. He noted that this was a unique partnership, and he wanted to acknowledge the professionalism of the Fire Department employees who have worked in the best interests of the City. Mr. Brady also reported that a City Employee Care Fund was established to assist those who have lost their jobs, and he thanked the Fire Department's labor union for their donation of \$1,000 to the fund.

Fire Chief Harry Beck introduced Assistant Chief Dan Stubbs, who is in charge of the Operations Division, and Assistant to the Chief Radona Orlando, who oversees the management services area.

Chief Beck noted that Building Safety serves as an extension of the Public Safety function by ensuring that buildings are properly constructed. He also expressed appreciation to the Council for recognizing the importance of Neighborhood Services, a department that addresses problems that would otherwise become Public Safety issues. Chief Beck said that he also wanted to recognize the efforts and cooperation of the union and in particular, Bryan Jeffries for his leadership. He noted that the union participated in developing the plan and has offered to assist with the implementation.

Chief Beck displayed a PowerPoint presentation (a copy is available for review in the City Clerk's Office), and he provided an overview of the department's mission and current resources. He stated that Mesa's firefighters display a high level of commitment and provide high quality service. Chief Beck advised that 75 percent of the department's responses are related to emergency medical services (EMS), 60 percent of which require Basic Life Support (BLS) and 40 percent require Advanced Life Support (ALS).

Responding to a request from Mayor Smith, Chief Beck explained that Basic Life Support is an incident that is not life threatening and that Advanced Life Support requires immediate medical intervention for a life threatening incident. Chief Beck noted that an aging population increases the demand for services.

In answer to a series of questions from Mayor Smith, Chief Beck advised that the central and eastern parts of Mesa generate a larger number of calls during the winter months. He said that the majority of Mesa's winter visitors typically have a lower income and do not have a local physician. Chief Beck noted that thirty years ago EMS was a sideline for the Fire Department.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that the model for providing emergency services is expected to change over the years; that hospital emergency rooms are overburdened with Basic Life Support patients; and that the Fire Department is burdened with the costs for responding to these calls.

Chief Beck reported that the resources presently available include 19 fire engines, 5 ladder trucks, 17 fire stations and 324 firefighters.

Responding to a question from Vice Mayor Jones, Chief Beck said that the national average ratio of firefighters for a city the size of Mesa is one per thousand of population, and he noted that the City of Phoenix has a ratio of 1.2 per thousand. He advised that both the City of Mesa and the City of Apache Junction have a ratio of 0.7, which is the lowest in the Valley.

Chief Beck advised that Mesa's basic model for response to any incident are companies that are staffed by four individuals who have advanced training that enable them to handle any situation, and two of the individuals are paramedics. He added that Mesa's paramedics are among the highest trained in the country. Chief Beck noted that efforts to improve response times in the southern and eastern sections of Mesa include reassigning engine company E2201 to Fire Station 217, accelerating the construction of Station 219 and working with DMB regarding the construction of Station 220.

Further discussion ensued relative to the fact that the new service model responds to an increase in service calls by providing the flexibility to reposition an engine company to another station; and that resources can be managed in a manner that maximizes service.

Chief Beck outlined the four types of responses to 911 calls:

- High emergencies (engines and ladders)
- Low emergencies (TRVs)
- Social Services (Connector volunteers)
- Service Calls (service truck assistance)

In response to a question from Mayor Smith regarding the Connector Program, Chief Beck confirmed that an engine company would remain at a site until the Connector volunteers arrive. He added that in the event of a high emergency while an engine company is waiting for the Connector unit, a lower level unit would be moved to that location so that the engine company could respond to the high-level emergency. Chief Beck stated that the department recognizes the fact that social service calls are becoming more frequent and therefore, these types of services are being incorporated into their planning.

Chief Beck outlined the plan for the Fire Dispatch and Deployment area, which includes the following:

- Reassign staff to provide 24-hour supervision in the Dispatch Center.
- Provide training to improve Emergency Medical Services triaging.
- Update deployment and coverage management.
- Improve information that is provided to responders.
- Reinvent the dispatch data and reporting system.

Responding to comments by Mayor Smith, Chief Beck concurred that data should be gathered regarding the proper allocation of resources. He noted that the department's response system would become more efficient as improved data and new technology enable the proper resources to be dispatched to a call.

Mr. Brady noted that three high-level positions are being added to the Dispatch Center in order to provide experience and knowledge that are not presently available.

Chief Beck advised that the next step is to reinvent the Deployment System by utilizing TRVs (Transitional Response Vehicles). He stated that the Pilot Program has proven to be very successful. Chief Beck noted that although the TRVs have been out of service during the past two months for a reevaluation, he proposed that Engine 218 be converted into two TRV units that will operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with one unit at Station 203 and the other at Station 201.

In response to a question from Councilmember Somers, Chief Beck said that the Mutual Aid Agreement requires Mesa to respond with a four-member unit to mutual aid calls. He added that the TRV Program may be adopted by other cities in the Valley.

Mayor Smith suggested that the Mutual Aid Agreement stipulation regarding a “four-member unit” be reviewed to enable Mesa to respond to calls in a more cost effective manner. He expressed concern that other municipalities utilize a standard that is lower than Mesa’s standard with respect to their staffing.

Responding to a question from Councilmember Richins, Chief Beck advised that approximately 80 percent of the calls for the City’s western Fire Stations (201 and 203) relate to medical issues, most of which are for Basic Life Support calls that can be addressed by the TRVs.

Chief Beck stated the opinion that the TRV Program represents a new reality regarding Fire Department response that incorporates flexibility and new technology and enables the proper units to provide the appropriate response. He reported that TRV units would be equipped with surplus heart monitors and that the Continuous Cardiac Resuscitation (CCR) technique would continue to be utilized. Chief Beck said that the plan includes assigning additional TRV units to three Fire Stations. He added that expanding the staffing of physician assistants on TRV units would provide relief to crowded conditions in hospital emergency rooms, and he noted that physician assistants can legally bill for their services, which would assist in cost recovery.

Chief Beck advised that other proposed changes include the following:

- Converting centralized department training to on-duty battalion-level training by utilizing video conferencing, which would maintain the availability of the battalion to respond to an emergency.
- Expanding Fire and Life Safety Education into 911 Education, EMS (Emergency Medical Services) Prevention and Emergency Preparedness, including partnerships with the private sector to provide sponsorships.
- Expanding the volunteer programs to assist with responses to social service and other service calls and developing incentive programs to reward volunteers for their service and minimize the turnover.

Councilmember Kavanaugh noted that a centralized volunteer coordinator would provide a focal point for the recruitment effort.

Vice Mayor Jones noted that additional volunteers are needed during the current economic crisis.

Councilmember Higgins expressed support for adding a Volunteer Coordinator if that position could generate additional cost savings over and above the cost to staff the position.

Chief Beck concurred that the City is fortunate to have many volunteers who are willing to assist the community. He continued the presentation by noting that the department plans to pursue methods to encourage public facilities to have automated external defibrillators (AEDs) with designated trained employees.

Chief Beck displayed a chart depicting the planned budget reductions (see Attachment 2) planned by the Fire Department. He noted that the proposal reassigns a number of positions, and he added that attrition accounts for the reduction of 23 employees. Chief Beck stated that the Council's support of the TRV program enabled the Fire Department to develop changes to the service model that reduces the budget and maintains service levels.

Mayor Smith commended the efforts of the Fire Department and its employees for their efforts to propose changes to the service model while maintaining service levels.

c. Summary of Budget Discussions

City Manager Christopher Brady referred to the document titled, "Estimated Reductions in General and Quality of Life Fund Sources" (see Attachment 3), which lists reductions proposed by specific City departments and the compensation adjustments. He reported that the State's previous commitment of LTAFII (Local Transportation Assistance Fund II) funding in the amount of \$800,000 is not likely to materialize. Mr. Brady suggested that the shortfall be addressed by the proceeds from the sale of City land. He added that staff is proposing that Dial-A-Ride service be extended Citywide for the next fiscal year at a cost of approximately \$230,000 to allow time for the Council to address Mesa's transit policy.

Councilmember Somers expressed appreciation to Mr. Brady for his efforts regarding transportation services. He said that although utilizing the land sale proceeds to fund Dial-A-Ride is generally poor fiscal policy, he supports the action in the short-term while alternatives are studied.

Mr. Brady asked that the Council identify any areas that require additional information, and he added that staff is seeking direction regarding the proposed budget adjustments.

Vice Mayor Jones suggested that the listing for each department indicate the percentage of the budget reduction in terms of budget dollars and full-time employees.

Mayor Smith requested that Councilmembers refer any additional questions regarding the budget to Mr. Brady prior to the next meeting.

Mr. Brady suggested that future budget discussions be held in the context of the Council's strategic initiatives.

Mayor Smith concurred that the Council's strategic initiatives should be at the forefront of the discussions. He stated that the Council should consider its principles and priorities rather than concentrating solely on the numbers when making budget decisions.

Deputy City Manager Bryan Raines reported that the October 2008 sales tax revenue report was in line with the earlier projection provided by Budget Director Chuck Odom.

2. Appointments to boards and committees.

Mayor Smith recommended the following appointments to boards and committees:

<u>Board or Committee</u>	<u>Expiration of Term</u>
BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT:	
Judah Nativio	June 30, 2010
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE	
Randy Mann	June 30, 2011
Jared Roberts	June 30, 2010
HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD	
Steve Schild	June 30, 2010
HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD	
Michael Petramalo	June 30, 2010
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY	
Dacie Lewis	May 15, 2014
JUDICIAL ADVISORY BOARD	
Honorable Daniel A. Barker	June 30, 2011
LIBRARY ADVISORY BOARD	
Sharon Webster	June 30, 2010
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD	
Ian Bennett	June 30, 2010
Matt Tolman	June 30, 2010
Jerel Campbell	June 30, 2009

It was moved by Councilmember Richins, seconded by Councilmember Higgins, that the Council concur with the Mayor's recommendations and the appointments be confirmed.

Carried unanimously.

3. Hear reports on meetings and/or conferences attended.

Councilmember Higgins: District 5 Pancake Breakfast and Food Drive.

Vice Mayor Jones: Mesa Police Academy Graduation.

Councilmember Kavanaugh: Ceremony unveiling the Art Wrap Program.

4. Scheduling of meetings and general information.

City Manager Christopher Brady reported that the "Doing Business with Mesa" event was very successful and will be held again in the near future. He thanked the Mesa Chamber of Commerce, the Neighborhood Economic Development Corporation (NEDCO) and City staff for their participation.

He stated that the meeting schedule is as follows:

Wednesday, December 17, 2008, 8:00 a.m. – Audit and Finance Committee

Thursday, December 18, 2008, 7:30 a.m. – Study Session

Saturday, December 27, 2008, 10:00 a.m. – Light Rail Transit Opening

5. Items from citizens present.

There were no items from citizens present.

6. Convene an Executive Session.

It was moved by Vice Mayor Jones, seconded by Councilmember Somers, that the Council convene an Executive Session.

Carried unanimously.

- a. Discussion or consideration of employment, assignment, appointment, promotion, demotion, salaries, discipline, dismissal or resignation of a public officer, appointee or employee of the City. (A.R.S. 38-431.03A (1))

1. City Clerk review

7. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Study Session adjourned at 9:53 a.m.

SCOTT SMITH, MAYOR

ATTEST:

LINDA CROCKER, CITY CLERK

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Study Session of the City Council of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 11th day of December 2008. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

LINDA CROCKER, CITY CLERK

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Attachments (3)